The Woods

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The Woods

by extremelyperturbed

Summary

This is a riff on the horror movie The Witch, set in 1630 New England. Jack decides to leave the walled settlement with his son Will and a few men to live in an open space near the woods. Things go terribly wrong.

https://youtu.be/YjBN0ByAqDk is the trailer to the movie. It won't follow the movie precisely. Also, I found the movie more spooky than scary/gory.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

Will sat at the end of the wagon and watched as the town retreated in the distance. Jack and his men had been exiled for stubbornly insisting on expressing their faith or rather Jack's faith as he saw fit. Now they all had to pay the penalty for doing as his adoptive father had wished.

He had not wanted to leave England but the death of his adoptive mother seemed to compel Jack to leave England and move to the New World and now to move further into the wilds where nobody could tell him what to do. He was not someone who could be easily swayed once he had made a decision.

After a day's worth of travel, Jack found a wide open field near the woods. "We're going to establish our farms here," he said.

Will looked at the woods and shivered. "Is there anybody living there?"

Jack frowned. "No. Some of the natives might pass through there to reach town but nobody lives there. Why?"

"It gives me a bad feeling. I think we should go somewhere else."

"Will . . . There's a river full of fish, room for everyone."

"I don't like the woods."

"If you're afraid of bears or any large animals, everybody is armed."

"But . . ."

"We're settling here."

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Jack looked proudly at the houses and the fields he and his men had created. Corn had been planted and each man had his own shelter. There was a common chicken coop and a common pen for the goats and a stable for the horses. If they were careful, they could last the winter and create a settlement that would attract more settlers.

He knew that having an all-male settlement with the sole exception of Hobbs' daughter would be problematic. However, he also knew that unless it felt more secure, there was little prospect of women joining then outside the fortified walls of the town they had left. A good harvest would ensure that they could trade and show that they had much to offer. Once they settled down, they would have little motivation to go back to town.

He frowned when he saw Will come back with his fishing rod in his hand. He couldn't help but worry about his son. He could scarcely find a match in England and would find a harder time here. While a hard worker and not bad looking, he had a tendency to day dream and

prefer his own company. He briefly wondered if he should have left him with a family in town or had him apprenticed to someone he trusted. While his son seemed to have feelings for Abigail, it was clear her father had no intention of marrying her to him.

"I've got some fish," said Will.

"Good, it's nice to eat something other than porridge," said Jack. "It's a pity that there are no apples in this forest."

"We could trade for some," said Will.

"If we're going to trade, it's going to be for things we need."

"I wish we could get some meat."

This caused Jack to scowl. Despite the men being good shots, they seemed unable to bring home any meat. Not even a rabbit had been brought in. "I know. I'll be trying my luck again tomorrow."

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Will went to bed, tired and weary. Life had become a never-ending wheel of prayer and work and sleep with meager meals to keep them going. There was nobody interested in keeping him company while working the fields and little was said at home except talk about God and proper behavior.

After seeing light from behind his eyelids, Will opened them to find himself in a beautiful chapel lit as if it was the height of summer, with arches and artwork lining the walls. It awed him yet made him feel guilty because Jack would have disapproved of the extravagance.

"Do you like it?"

He turned to see the owner of the voice. It was an older man with unusually sharp cheekbones, dressed in the finest clothes, his light brown hair pulled back in a ponytail. "I do but my father would find it excessive."

"I didn't ask what he thought. I asked what you thought."

"It's beautiful."

The man smiled. "It is the Cappella Palatina, one of my favorite places in the world."

"You own this?"

"No, I just happen to visit often."

Will's stomach took that moment to growl. He hoped that the other man didn't hear it.

"If you like, we could go to my house nearby."

"I don't even know your name."

"It's Hannibal Lecter. And yours?"

"It's Will Graham." Will reproached himself for being fearful inside a dream because what else could it be.

"I have a pork loin roasting in the oven. I am sure it's done by now. I also have an apple tart cooling on the table."

Will's stomach growled again. "It's so embarrassing," said Will.

The man smiled and said, "Your body is telling you what it needs. There is no shame in giving it what it wants. Come."

Will walked out of the chapel with the man leading the way. "I should tell you that I have nothing to give you. The only thing I have is my chain of gold with a silver cross."

"The only thing I want is the pleasure of your company."

"I'm not especially wise."

"I will be the judge of that."

It was a short walk to the house. Hannibal took out a small key, opened the door and invited him in.

Hannibal went into the kitchen and put a roasted pork loin on the table to join the apple tart already there. There was also a basket full of rolls and a butter dish with pale white butter next to the basket. The smell of them both made Will tremble with pleasure and his mouth water.

"Please sit down," said Hannibal.

Will sat down and watched Hannibal plate their food. Will said, "Shall I say grace?"

"You may."

After Will said grace, he followed his host in eating the food. Will quickly finished his plate. Hannibal smiled indulgently and replenished it.

"How has the harvest been?"

Will put down his fork and knife. "The corn has been blighted. While some is salvageable, we were hoping for a bumper crop so we could trade with the settlement. It wouldn't be so bad if we had better luck with hunting but . . . not even a rabbit. The only protein we've been getting has been the fish I've been catching."

"I am sorry to hear that. If things are so hard, can you not go to the settlement?"

"Jack won't let us. I think that Brian and Jimmy are already talking about going back. I am afraid that I might be the only one left with him if things get worse."

"Perhaps you could go back with Brian and Jimmy."

"He won't let me. Besides, I'll have to be someone's servant to get by."

"And the people in the settlement were not kind."

"Many weren't."

"Come here as often as you please," said Hannibal. "My door will always be open to you."

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"Will! Will!"

Will opened his eyes that he was in bed and saw Jack frowning at him from the foot of the bed. "Yes?"

"The sun is up, time to work."

Will groaned and sat up. "I'll get dressed in a minute. What's for breakfast?"

"Gruel."

Chapter 2

"Why are we in the woods?" said Will as he and Jack walked between the trees.

"I'm checking the traps and seeing if we can't find a deer or rabbit," said Jack, holding a gun.

"How about we go to the nearby valley and see if there are any fruit trees?"

"Stop being afraid. God will protect us. Oh, look!"

There was a monstrously giant black stag with towering antlers. It seemed to be looking at them without fear, even something resembling contempt. Will caught its eyes and instantly knew that trying to kill it would be a bad idea.

"Jack, don't!"

"Hush. you'll scare it away." Jack prepared his flintlock rifle, and pointed it at the beast. Unfortunately, instead of killing it, the rifle misfired and there was a flash of powder near Jack's face instead. The stag ran off.

"Are you all right?" said Will.

"I can still see. It just hurts. It's never done that before. I'm afraid you're going to have to fish again today. Go to the river while I check the rest of the traps."

***

Will was fishing at a nearby river when he saw Abigail walk towards him. "Oh, hello, Abigail," said Will. "Where's your father?"

"He's at home. Before he left the settlement, he had bought a bottle of wine. He's sleeping it off," she said.

"Jack wouldn't approve."

"You won't tell him, right."

Will shook his head. "No."

They both smiled at each other.

Abigail said, "It's nice to be out by myself. You don't know what it's like to be constantly watched or forced to stay indoors day in and day out. If he could, he'd have us live by ourselves but he worries that I'd be kidnapped by Indians or a passing trapper."

Will put his hand on top of the basket holding his catch. "I have a fish."

Abigail shook her head. "No, I don't dare take it. I'd have to explain who I got it from."

"I'm sorry."

"Sometimes, I think of walking all the way back to the settlement but I know he'd just take one of the horses and drag me back here. I really wish I could just leave and go somewhere he couldn't."

"He loves you."

"He loves me too much."

"I must confess that if neither of our fathers would pursue us, I'd go with you."

Abigail looked startled and pointed towards the woods several hundred yards away. "Oh, look at that."

Will looked where she was pointing and saw the same black stag that he had seen earlier that day. On its antlers was a crown of flowers. "We should go back . . ."

However, Abigail seemed entranced by it. "Oh, he's beautiful . . ." Will grabbed her by the arm but she shook his grip off.

The stag trotted towards them slowly as if to show his intentions were not hostile. Even so, Will would have run if Abigail would've run with him. The stag stopped before Abigail and bent his head. Abigail walked towards him and picked the flower crown off his antlers. She put it on top of her head while the stag raised his head. She patted it on his snout and said, "If only you could take me away from here."

The stag went down on his knees as if to invite her to ride him. Abigail hesitated.

"Abigail, you get over here!"

Will turned to see it was Garret Jacob Hobbs, her father, screaming in the distance. He turned back to see that Abigail was already on the beast's back and it had started to run for the woods.

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"Liar!" screamed Garret Jacob Hobbs. After chasing fruitlessly after the stag, he had dragged Will back to Jack's house. "Your boy let her run into the woods with the stag. He conspired with a demon to steal my child away from me."

"Your breath reeks of liquor," said Jack. "A stag ran away with your daughter? More like she ran back to the settlement."

"Father . . ." said Will but Jack raised his hand to shush him.

Brian said, "Jimmy and I will ride back to the settlement and see if she's on her way or gotten her way there. If we see her, we will take her back here."

"You do that," said Jack. "Meanwhile, I will search in the woods for her."

"I also plan to search the woods for her!" said Garret. "I want Will to stay at home. I do not want him to warn his familiar that I'm coming to kill it."

"Hold your tongue," said Jack.

"I will not! Look at him, we eat porridge day after day to the point my ribs show and he's plump as if he drinks cream and feasts on geese."

"While I think Will should stay at home, I do it because it may be that she may come back here. Unless you are admitting to being the type of father one would wish to run away from."

"When I find my daughter, I am leaving this accursed place!" screamed Garret before stomping off with his rifle.

"You are welcome to leave," said Jack.

After the rest of the men left, Will said to Jack. "Why didn't you let me tell them the truth?"

"I'd rather have Brian and Jimmy search for her as a lost girl rather than hunt for her as a witch."

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Will lit a lamp and started a fire in the fireplace shortly before the sun set. He heard the door open and he turned to see it was a weary looking Jack. "You didn't find her?"

Jack shook his head. "I didn't see the stag either."

"I am making soup today," said Will as he put a pot of vegetables and herbs and milk over the fire.

"That's good," said Jack.

"What are we going to do if we can't find her?"

"I don't know. We will pray to God that she finds her way to him."

"But suppose he does not find her worthy or blame her for something that . . ."

"Will . . . She made her choice, God sees everything, leave judgment of her soul to him. Now let us pray."

***

"You don't seem very hungry," said Hannibal.

Will was again sitting at his dining table at his house. Before him was a large bowl of chicken soup. "I have a lot on my mind. My friend Abigail is missing."

"Oh, how terrible, what happened?"

"I think dark magic was involved. A giant stag took off with her into the woods and I haven't seen her since. I'm afraid of what might be happening to her, if she's still alive."

"I see."

"What's worse is that my father doesn't want to see me worried or grieving for her. He talks about how it's not godly but I know it's more because he sees it as a personal insult."

"It is not right for him to ask you to repress your true feelings. It seems like he's interested in your utility than your humanity."

"What I can do for him rather than who I am to him."

"Precisely."

"The problem is that I know how she felt. She wanted to run away from there and I wish . . ."

"Tell me what you wish . . ."

"I wish that this wasn't just a dream, that I could stay here." Will began to weep.

Hannibal got up from the opposite side and sat next to Will. "I wish that too."

Will got up from the table. "You're not even real. You can say anything but I'll still be stuck in . . ."

Hannibal stood up and wrapped his arms around him. He stroked his hair and began kissing his tears away. "I promise you that it won't always be like this."

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Jack realized the next morning that Garret had not returned. His bed had not been slept in and there was no footsteps in the moist earth that showed he had ever come home.

Chapter 3

After Jack spent the morning looking for any sign of either Hobbs in the woods, he came home and split wood for the fireplace until his hands ached.

He began to wonder what was taking Brian and Jimmy so long. He understood that it would take time to get there, look for her and then come back with someone who had no desire to come back. However, as he had another silent dinner with Will, he couldn't help but fret and sleep was poor that night.

The next morning, the horses they had taken were still not back in the stable. He went to the house the men shared and knocked on the door. There was no answer. He opened the door and found a letter on the table.

"Dear Jack, by the time you find this letter, Brian and I will be back at the settlement. We have no plans to return. Even before the Hobbs girl disappeared, we have been disquieted by the atmosphere of the woods. Our guns that we have relied on without worry, either misfire or miss even animals a few feet away from us. Our share of the corn is hard no matter how long we cook it and bitter as ashes. We are taking the horses as our share of what we have put into this. We are leaving behind our share of the corn, our share of the goats and any implements we have not taken with us as compensation. If you ever need to send Will back to the settlement, we would not mind welcoming him into our home."

Jack crumpled the letter in his fist Cowards, he thought. No wonder they haven't been cutting firewood for the winter.

"Jack! Look!" Jack heard Will scream.

Jack opened the door and saw Garret Jacob Hobbs, naked and pale to the point of looking bloodless, leaning next to the chicken coop. Will was at the door of their house with the pail meant for the eggs on the ground.

Jack yelled, "Let's get him inside."

Once they got the naked man inside, they put him down on bedding they had on the floor and put blankets on top of him. He lay still with his eyes closed with only shallow breathing showing that he still lived.

"Jack, what happened to him?"

"I think he's been bewitched."

"Perhaps we should take him back to the settlement," said Will.

"With what? Brian and Jimmy took the horses and they're not coming back."

"How do you . . ."

Jack threw him the crumpled letter. "Read for yourself. They abandoned us."

Will read the letter then slowly put it down. "What do we do in the meantime?"

"We shall pray over him and ask for God to release him from this devilry. And offer him what nourishment we can."

Jack knelt next to the unconscious man and said, "Lord, hear our prayer . . ."

Suddenly, Garret sat up with his eyes wide open. "See! See! She stands before me in red velvet and white silk and her neck dripping with rubies and gold."

"Who?" said Jack.

"Abigail. I saw her in the woods. She smelled of incense and she wore a crown of flowers. She welcomed me and kissed my lips and offered me many treats . . ."

Garret suddenly began coughing and retching and something landed on the floor. Both Jack and Will looked at what he had vomited and were both repulsed when they realized that it was a human ear.

"Burn it," said Jack

Will took a piece of cloth so he wouldn't have to touch it directly and threw them both into the fireplace. He ran back to the room where Garret was back on the floor, moaning and shaking and calling out for Abigail.

"Keep watch over him while I make him some pancakes to eat."

Jack went to the kitchen and grabbed an egg from the barrel of cold lime water which kept the eggs fresh. He cracked open one egg only to have a partially formed dead chick fall out. He threw that into the fire and after rinsing the bowl, he opened another egg only to have it pour out blood instead of yolk and white. When he cracked up the third egg, the yolk was broken and a foul stench of sulfer overwhelmed him. After he threw the contents of the bowl outside and rinsed the smell out of it, he went back inside and yelled, "Will?"

"Yes?"

Jack thought for a second before he said, "I want you to make the pancakes." He put the bowl aside and brought out a new one.

He watched as Will took out two eggs and cracked them open, one at a time, releasing perfectly good yolks and whites into the bowl. He watched as Will poured goat milk and sugar into the bowl without incident before walking back to Garret.

Even though he knew there was nothing wrong with the pancakes Will brought in, the taste of them seemed very bitter to him.

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"What is it that you're playing?" said Will as he sat in Hannibal's salon, watching him play with an ease that filled with him with a mixture of awe and envy.

"A harpsichord."

"I know that but I meant the song you're playing," said Will as he watched Hannibal coax a soft lullaby from its keys.

"It's something I created myself. I'm not completely finished, however," said Hannibal as he stopped playing the song. "Do you play?"

"No, but when we lived in England, sometimes we'd listen to our neighbor play. It's been years since I heard one played."

"Have things improved since last we talked."

"No. It's not only gotten worse, it's gotten stranger."

"Stranger?"

"Both Brian and Jimmy have abandoned us. Abigail is still missing. Garret disappeared then reappeared but now spends half his time fitfully sleeping and the other half raving mad nonsense about Abigail. And my father . . ."

"What about him?"

"He looks at me strangely and coldly. I believe he thinks I had something to do with her disappearance and the things that have been happening. He does not openly accuse me but I can tell."

"Did you?"

"No!"

"I believe you. I do not know why he doesn't. Come, let's sit in front of the fire."

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will sat down on the couch. Hannibal approached him holding two cups. "I hope you like mulled wine."

Will smiled. "It's been a long time." Will took one of the cups and sniffed deeply. "It smells good." Will took a sip after Hannibal began drinking. It was sweet, spicy and filled him with a warm feeling from within.

"I was wondering if you would like to go to a play or a party."

"I would prefer a play over a party," said Will. "Mostly because you're one of the few people who actually enjoy my company."

"I don't see why anybody would have a problem with your company."

Will chuckled bitterly. "Yours is a solitary opinion." After that statement, he quickly drank the rest of the cup.

"Then I appreciate having you all to myself," said Hannibal before he put down his cup on a nearby table, put his hand on Will's cheek and kissed him on the lips.

Will closed his eyes and lost himself in the kiss. However when Hannibal broke the kiss, he was filled with remorse and said, "This is a sin."

"Did you not enjoy it?"

"Father said that sin wears the clothes of pleasure to win admittance to the house of the soul."

"Your father is a very clever man but why is it that all the things he considers sins are pleasures while being good seems to bring nothing but suffering?"

"I don't know."

"Is this your first kiss?"

"Yes."

"Do you really regret me kissing you?"

"No." Will did not like to see the look of hurt and sadness on his face.

"Can I kiss you again?"

"Yes." He closed his eyes.

He felt himself being kissed then kissed again while Hannibal's arms encircled him.

***

"Will! Will!"

Will opened his eyes and saw that it was his father looking down at him. "What is it?"

"I heard you crying out in your sleep. I thought someone was attacking you. What were you dreaming about?"

"I don't remember . . ." said Will. He had never told him about any of his dreams and he wasn't going to talk about this one in particular. After many more kisses, Hannibal had opened his shirt and kissed him all over his chest before untying the drawstring of his breeches and touching the most private part of him and taking it into his mouth. It had scared him just how pleasurable that was.

Jack looked as if he wanted to continue pressing Will on this when they heard Garret screaming in the next room.

Once there, they saw Garret with his eyes open but unfocused and smiling but in a terrifying way. "God is among us. He comes in black with his handmaiden in red. He blesses me with his presence and is among us now. He is coming to take me!" He pointed at a corner and said, "Can you not see him? See! See!"

There was nothing in the corner but Will and Jack could not help but shrink back from the area he was pointing. Garret closed his eyes and fell back on the bed.

"Garret? Garret?" said Jack. He shook the man but could not awaken him. He noticed that his chest was not rising and falling. He felt for his breath and there was none. He felt for his pulse and his heart was still. Jack turned to Will. "He's dead."

***

They had buried him and it had so tired them that after expending the effort to clean themselves up and eat a quick dinner of bread and smoked fish, they went to bed and slept deeply and soundly. They woke up late the next morning and found that the chicken coop had been raided and all the chickens either missing or ripped to pieces. Jack allowed him to say, "Damn."

"What are we going to do?" said Will.

"I need your necklace."

Will touched the chain around his throat. "Why?"

"We're going to need more supplies if we're going to make it through the winter."

"This is the only thing that I have from my parents. I never wanted to come out here. I want to go home."

"To the settlement?"

"No, to England. I hate it here."

"Will!"

"No, you don't get to ask me to give up my home, my dogs, and any hope of finding someone to be with and ask for this, too!"

"Will, stop being petulant."

Will backed away from Jack. "No, Garret's dead, Abigail is missing and both Brian and Jimmy left us. I don't want to stay here."

Chapter End Notes

I did think of having Garret gored or killed in a gruesome manner but I think it would have made Jack look too stupid despite the fact he is a canonically extremely stubborn man when goal focused. It's also more in step with the movie's mood and pacing.

Chapter 5

And that was when he felt a knock out punch to the gut before he lost consciousness.

When he woke up, Will found himself in the hut where the goats were kept. There were three canteens of water and a note. Will picked up the note. "I'm going to the settlement for supplies. I will be back in three days." Will felt for his necklace and realized it was gone.

Will tried to open the door of the enclosure only to find it wouldn't open. He threw himself at the door and kicked at it but it refused to budge. He screamed for Jack to come back but it was clear that he was long gone.

He went down on his knees and began to weep. He thought about how Jack was when Bella was still alive. He had been strict but capable of warmth and kindness, not this stern figure who only cared about doing things according to what he thought was right. After he had finished weeping, he felt so tired he laid down on the hay and slept, hoping that he would see Hannibal in his dreams.

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As the sun touched the horizon, Jack sat down on a large rock and put down the shoulder bag he had been carrying on his back. I don't understand, he thought. I should be a lot closer to town by now. He eyed one tree in particular. It was much too familiar. He knew he had seen it before several times. It was a tree whose trunk split in two directions a few feet from the ground. Yet he had been walking in a straight line with no sensation that he was deviating in his path in any way.

He took Will's necklace out of his pocket. He thought that Will was probably awake by now with the knowledge that he had taken it. He knew that even if he brought back a basket of apples and a puppy, he would never be forgiven.

He closed his eyes. Just a few minutes, then I'll start walking again.

He opened his eyes when he heard someone weeping. He turned and he saw his wife Bella, beautiful and healthy before the sickness, crying. "Bella, what is wrong?"

"Jack, what have you done? Why did you abandon our son?"

He stood up to greet her but she disappeared.

"Yes, Jack Crawford, why did you abandon your son?"

Jack turned around to see the black stag that he had failed to shoot that day. Instead of his gun, he slowly pulled his axe from the bag he had been carrying. He had a feeling that a misfired gun would get him killed this time. "What is it that you want, foul beast?"

"To tell you a few truths."

"Are you the one bewitching my path? Are you the one that blighted the corn? Are you the one who kidnapped the Hobbs girl?" In one hand, Jack held the axe and in the other, he held the cross on Will's chain.

"You have lost your way by yourself. The corn was not meant to grow there. As for Abigail, she came willingly."

"Demon," said Jack. "What are your intentions? Are you trying to prevent me from gathering a force against you?"

The stag laughed scornfully. "I have already destroyed a colony and scattered its inhabitants. Roanoke was its name. As for that little charm, why should anything be frightened by something that you stole from its rightful owner? Whatever power it might've had was neutralized by that sin." His horns burst into flames. "No, I am after something smaller yet more precious."

"Will?"

"How do you consider him precious when you only got him to please your childless and lonely wife? When she died, he lost his usefulness to you."

The words of the stag stung Jack because there was some truth to it. Once Bella had died, he had depended on Will to support him, to follow him, to demand little from him while he in return gave him none of the things a father should give his child. He made a promise then and there to himself that if he survived this fight, he would go back to Will and take them both back home to England. "You are right that I have not been the best father to him. However, if you think you are going to take him easily from me, you are wrong." With that he ran at the beast and swung the axe towards its head.

***

It had been four days since Jack had left and Will had run out of water. He had tried to stretch it by doing as little as possible and drinking as little as possible from the canteens. He had drunk milk straight from the goat but they had gone dry on the second day. Will had become afraid that Jack had been killed by the same force that had bewitched Garret and he would be die in here. The worst thing was that his sleep had been dreamless.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

By the afternoon, Will was feeling sick from hunger and thirst and being shut in with the goats. He cleared a patch of ground so he could create a fire to weaken the door so he could try to kick his way out. He did not have his flint to create the spark but he remembered seeing someone make one without a flint. He put one stick on the ground then took a roughly cylindrical stick and put it on top of and perpendicular to the first stick and began twirling it back and forth between his hands, hoping to create a spark. He worked on it for what seemed like half an hour until he managed to create some smouldering embers.

He quickly fed it a bundle of the driest bits of hay. He put the bundle of smoking hay next to the door and blew on it, then coughing as it quickly began smoking in earnest. He was frightened when the door began burning intensely instead of burning slowly and weakening like he had hoped. Terrified, he tried to put it out only for the fire to increase in its intensity. He scrambled away from the fire and was terrified that he would die from the fire before he could escape. He mentally cursed his father for leaving him so defenseless. He closed his eyes from the acrid smoke and began coughing and was slowly losing consciousness.

"Will! Will!"

Will opened his eyes to see that he was outside the hut, the fire had been extinguished and that he was being carried by Hannibal in his arms. "I must be going mad. I've finally lost my mind," said Will. "You're just someone I imagined."

Hannibal kissed him and kept his face close to his. "Do you not feel my lips? You feel my breath on your face, do you not?"

"How can you be here? And oh . . . you have a cut on your forehead." Will reached out and touched the wound.

Hannibal smiled sheepishly. "Yes, however I can reassure you that the other party got the worst of it. Ever since we met in the land of dreams, I have been planning on coming to see you. It took me a while to figure out your precise location from what you've told me. Why is it that you do not look happy to see me?"

"My father will be back . . . He'll chase you away."

Hannibal went inside the nearest house. Will gestured to a room and Hannibal entered the room and put him on the bed. Hannibal knelt next to the bed and said, "How long has he been gone?"

"Four days and by next morning, five."

"Do you really think he's going to come back?"

Will started to tear up and shook his head. It had been too long. He had either been abandoned or something had happened that prevented Jack's return.

"Even if he was, you don't have to wait for him. He has nothing to offer you. He is the one who put you in the same place he kept the goats." Hannibal stood up.

"No, don't go," said Will. He was afraid that if he lost sight of him, he would disappear.

"I am not leaving you. I am merely making you something to drink to soothe your thirst and get your strength back."

Hannibal went into the next room then shortly came back with a cup that he gave to Will. "It's a mushroom tea. It'll make you feel better."

Will looked at the cup of steaming hot liquid and said, "How . . ." It seemed incredibly fast to make something from scratch.

"I was carrying some with me in my canteen and I just warmed it up . . ."

Despite the questions he had, Will drank the cup because he was so very thirsty. It had an odd but not unpleasant flavor.

Hannibal took the cup away from him and put it on a nearby table. "Do you feel any better?"

"I feel lightheaded and hazy." He tried to worry about it but found that it was like trying to catch a fish with one's hands.

"That will pass. I will draw you a bath and make you something to eat."

"I'd rather you stay. Stay with me, Hannibal. I can do that later." All his doubt and inhibitions seemed to float away, and was replaced with drowsy desire. Will closed his eyes and murmured, "I thought you were
just a dream I had, something I created because I had nothing. I can't bear the thought that I'm dreaming now."

"My dear Will, if you were to pledge yourself to me, none of it would have to be a dream. You could feast for the rest of your life on pastries made with fresh butter and the finest meats. You would never shiver from cold or roughen your hands with fruitless labor."

"How am I to do that?"

"With your body . . . Reveal yourself to me."

Will opened his eyes and pulled off his shirt but his fingers seemed unable to untie the fastening of his breeches. "I'm sorry . . ."

"Don't be . . . Allow me to help you."

Will's pants were soon off and he was on the bed naked, his legs wide apart and a light blush on his face. Hannibal pulled off his boots and doffed his clothes. Looking down at Will,

Hannibal stood with his shoulders broad and his cock, half hard. "You've never touched anybody else's, have you?"

Will shook his head.

He got up on the bed and slid next to Will. "I have seen art collections in so many countries but your face is what I desire to see most of all." Stroking Will's hair, Hannibal began singing in a language Will did not understand.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm singing a lullaby, a song to someone who you want to make one's sweetheart."

"You want me to be your sweetheart?"

Hannibal stopped to chuckle. "I have been courting you all this time." He began singing again softly and the more he sang, the more relaxed Will felt.

"Ever heard of magic," Hannibal said after he ended his lullaby.

Will said, "My father disapproved of it but when mother was alive, we went to a show where they had a magician who did a trick with cups and balls, and causing a bird to appear in a cage. Are you saying you're a magician?"

"I'm saying that I'm magic itself," he said. "Anything is possible, everything is permissible." He tickled Will's side which made Will giggle then petted Will's cock which made it perk up slightly. He chuckled before taking Will into his arms and began kissing him on the lips then slowly guided him to getting him on his hands and knees while continuing to kiss him along his spine.

"What are you doing?" said Will as he felt fingers slide inside of him, slowly making the passage inside of him well-oiled.

"I'm preparing you so that I can show you a joy that would be forbidden."

Will put his hand over his mouth as the fingers began to dance inside him, making him feel warm and strange inside.

"Release your voice," said Hannibal as he pulled his fingers out and slowly let his cock enter Will. "Let me hear how you feel."

With that, Will began to shout and moan out loud as he was taken from behind. He tried to feel shame and embarrassment but he could no longer even pretend to feel them, knowing that Hannibal mounting him and touching him in this manner was considered the height of wickedness. He only ended up finding that the idea of it being wicked only made him want to shake his hips more and beg for Hannibal to keep thrusting. He had had no idea such pleasure could exist and no admonition could keep him from chasing release from this. Will arched his back, curled his toes and came, spilling for several seconds unto the sheets. He collapsed back on the bed and closed his eyes, feeling completely limp and satiated.

"You can't go to sleep quite yet," said Hannibal as he picked up and carried Will from the bed.

In front of the fireplace was a large metal tub full of warm water where there hadn't been one. He watched as water sloshed over the side as Hannibal put him down into it and he slid down so only his head rested on the edge of the tub.

The bath water smelled of flowers and scented oils. Will let Hannibal slowly scrub his body with a washcloth. He felt the Hannibal's hand on top of his head. "I want you to put your head underneath the water for a second then come back up," said Hannibal.

Will let his head fall beneath the water, closed his eyes and held his breath. As Hannibal promised, the pressure on his head disappeared and he raised his head from the water, expelling his breath. As he opened his eyes, it was like he saw the world anew, no longer filtered through his father's talk of sin and righteousness.

Hannibal seemed to sense this as he helped Will out of the bath and toweled him dry. After he dressed him in new clothes and shoes, he kissed Will's face a dozen times and sighed with pleasure.

"There is one more thing. Come outside, I have a special surprise for you, said Hannibal

Hannibal led him through the door and it took a second for Will to understand what he was seeing. "Abigail?"

"It's me, Will." Her old simple clothes were gone and she was wearing a green frock with a matching silk scarf. She was wearing pearl earrings and an elegant emerald necklace.

"Do you like what you see?" said Hannibal.

Will hugged Abigail. "You're really all right?"

"I'm fine."

Hannibal looked terribly pleased. "Now let us go home. I have a fine feast awaiting us."

"How?" said Will.

"We ride astride these," said Hannibal as he caused three poles made of bone to magically appear.

"What kind of bone are they made of?"

"Does it really matter?"

"No."

The End

Chapter End Notes

https://youtu.be/VbkPzGxwVXs shows how the Masai create a fire. Variations of this have been done elsewhere. It's a lot harder than it looks from what I hear.

The goats are fine. They ran off after Hannibal turned the fire off and Hannibal didn't think they were worth cooking.

Yup, it's that same tea he gave Abigail in the episode whose title is the French word for egg.

This last section is quite different from the ending in The Witch. I don't want to spoil the movie though.

The bath is something like an anti-baptism or a baptism for a very different faith. I also found it a pity that they didn't have Will talk to Hannibal while he was taking a bath. The lullaby is also magic.

End Notes

The dream sequence is not from the movie but is more of a Hannibal thing. However, the heroine of the movie Thomasin remembers living in England where they lived in a house with glass windows while her brother does not and I wanted to show that Will misses the comparative luxury of living in the Old World.

It's very often the men/father who ignores warnings that "Hmm, things are going wrong" in horror movies.

As for fashion, Will's clothes is rustic much like the stuff in the movie while I imagine Hannibal wearing something like this: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1600%E2%80%9350_in_Western_European_fashion#/media/File:Carlos_de_Austria,_infante_de_Espa%C3%B1a.jpg

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